



The Sixty-ninth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell
and F. Lammot Belin

Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,798th Concert

Nordic Voices

Tone Elisabeth Braaten, *soprano*

Ingrid Hanken, *soprano*

Ebba Rydh, *mezzo-soprano*

Per Kristian Amundrød, *tenor*

Frank Havrøy, *baritone*

Trond Olav Reinholdtsen, *bass*

Presented in honor of

Edvard Munch: Master Prints

and in conjunction with

“Norway Comes to Washington”

October 10, 2010

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

Lasse Thoresen (b. 1949)

Solbønn

Norwegian Folk Tune

Arranged by Frank Havrøy (b. 1969)

Seidamma dei

Trond Kværno (b. 1945)

Ave Maris Stella

Henrik Ødegaard (b. 1955)

Ubi Caritas

Gisle Kverndokk (b. 1967)

Gloria

INTERMISSION

Ødegaard

Ave Verum Corpus

Norwegian Folk Tune

Arranged by Havrøy

Bia bia lite bån

Thoresen

Tvetrall

*This concert is made possible in part by assistance provided by
the Royal Norwegian Embassy*

The Musicians

Nordic Voices, a six-voice a cappella vocal ensemble from Oslo, Norway, has sung together for thirteen years. In its critically acclaimed concert at the National Gallery of Art in December 2008, the ensemble reinforced its reputation as one of the world's leading vocal ensembles of its type. The members of Nordic Voices are graduates of either the Norwegian Academy of Music or the Opera Academy in Oslo. Together they share a broad background in opera, composition, church music, and conducting. Performing a repertoire that ranges from medieval to contemporary works, Nordic Voices explores a wide spectrum of musical expression, from plainchant to specially commissioned new works. Not afraid to add a dash of humor to its concerts, it offers an unusual blend of sophisticated music-making and stylish performances. Two of its CDs — *Reges Terrae* (Chandos) and *Djånki-Don* (Aurora) — were recently nominated for the Norwegian recording industry's Spellemann Prize. In 2008 Nordic Voices received the Fartein Valen prize for contribution to Norwegian contemporary music.

Program Notes

The exhibition *Edvard Munch: Master Prints* brings together nearly sixty of Munch's most important prints to show how his persistent experimentation and virtuosic handling of woodcut, lithography, and intaglio endowed different impressions of his primary motifs with new meanings. Munch is renowned for his haunting portrayals of love, alienation, jealousy, and death—universal human experiences that he filtered through events in his own life. By manipulating color, line, texture, and pictorial details, he reworked these images in multiple print variations, continually renewing their power to express his artistic goals. The exhibition remains on view at the Gallery until October 31, 2010.

Edvard Munch's experiments with painting and printmaking techniques place him at the forefront of the development of modern expressionism. In *The Sick Child* from 1886 (National Gallery, Oslo), Munch attacks the surface—scoring, incising, scraping, and abrading the paint—fatiguing the canvas until the forms in the painting, most especially the head of his dying sister Sophie, appear to be disintegrating before our eyes. Tied to the poignancy of the theme, Munch's technique reinforces the subjectivity of the scene—the sense of the artist/brother trying to hold on to the image of his sister to whom he was devoted.

Munch's personal approach to painting involved not only the above-mentioned abrasive and kinetic techniques, but also thinning paint to encourage it to run across the surface and respond to gravity. Often he allowed bare canvas to show through in a finished work and left changes made during his creative process. Munch frequently placed his completed paintings outdoors (especially in winter) to “weather.”

As a printmaker, Munch responded strongly to the “primitive” quality of Paul Gauguin's woodcuts. He found much to admire in Gauguin's art and his own woodcuts reflect a similar spirit of experimentation. Munch often cut his blocks into puzzle-like pieces for different colors, inking them

separately, and reassembling them for the final pull. His tools included gouges for making deep cuts into the wood, resulting in bold, expressive effects of black and white. He also took advantage of the grain and imperfections of the wood itself in creating his images.

Munch and Gauguin shared a common friend—the English composer Frederick Delius (1862–1934). Delius was an art lover and in 1898 had purchased Gauguin’s important painting *Nevermore* of 1897. Gauguin’s first woodcuts were intended as illustrations for his Tahitian journal, *Noa Noa*, published in 1897 as well. When the journal was published in book form in 1901, Delius and Munch learned about plans by others to adapt that exotic work into new forms of music, dance, and theater. This excitement about *Noa Noa* encouraged the two men to consider a collaboration with a writer on a work that would combine words, pictures, and music. Unfortunately, this project was never realized.

One of Munch’s most important relationships was with the English violinist Evangeline Hope Muddock (c. 1883–1953), whose stage name was Eva Mudocci. Attracted by Mudocci’s stunning appearance and musical talent, he portrayed her in *The Violin Concert*, *The Brooch*, and *Salomé*, three prints from 1903, the year in which they met. Composers, writers, and playwrights were also an important part of Munch’s circle going back to his earliest days in Kristiana (present day Oslo) and continuing during his stays in Paris and Berlin. The Swedish playwright August Strindberg often remarked that Munch’s art needed musical explanation—words alone were inadequate to do it justice.

Munch’s great legacy as an artist was the willingness and fearlessness with which he plunged into the depths of his life, soul, and psyche. He realized this when he wrote: “Just as Leonardo da Vinci studied the recesses of the human body and dissected cadavers, I try to dissect souls.” Like Leonardo, Munch’s achievements are indicative of a lifelong commitment

to experimentation, variety of expression, and technical innovation. Unlike Leonardo, Munch held an unshakable belief in the primacy of his personal experiences and his relentless rumination on their universal significance. He wrote: “In my art I have tried to find an explanation for life and to discover its meaning. I also intended to help others understand life.”

Munch’s art continues to give permission to younger artists to look inward, to scrutinize, analyze, and disentangle the sources of the complex emotions and motivations that make us human. From generation to generation, his message has resonated most with those who believe as he did that “all art, literature, and music must be produced with one’s heart-blood. Art is the heart-blood of a person.”

Nordic Voices takes special pleasure in creating program concepts that revolve around themes, historical figures, or textual links, bringing the music to life in sometimes unexpected ways. Noting the groundbreaking innovations that Edvard Munch brought to printmaking, the ensemble has created a program of Norwegian music written by composers who have broken new ground in the area of vocal music. The selections include music inspired by Norwegian folk tunes as well as folk melodies arranged especially for Nordic Voices by one of its own members, Frank Havrøy. The program also explores unusual vocal techniques, such as overtone singing, and new ways of using the classically trained voice, including microtonal sound.

Notes on Edvard Munch by David Gariff, lecturer, National Gallery of Art

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Gesangverein Hofbieber

Music by Hassler, Lechner, and other
Renaissance composers

October 13, 2010
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



New York Opera Society

Max and Moritz: A Cartoon Opera in Seven Pranks
World Premiere Performance
by Gisle Kverndokk

Presented in honor of *Edvard Munch: Master Prints*
and in conjunction with “Norway Comes to Washington”

October 17, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
East Building Auditorium

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers the
Garden Café remains open for light
Refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

COVER: Detail from Edvard Munch, *The Brooch (Eva Mudocci)*, 1903,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Epstein Family Collection